

Transportable Sport Court

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The invention relates to a transportable sport court and, in particular, to a transportable sport court for playing bocce.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATED ART

[0002] Bocce is a court game similar to lawn bowling popular in Italy as well as the United States and can be played by players of all ages and skill levels. Bocce is generally played on a level, hard surface, such as packed dirt or gravel or asphalt. More specifically, a regulation court is built using six inches of granite fines that is compacted and leveled and a top layer of one-quarter to one-third inch of crushed oyster shell. Figure 1 is an illustrative figure of a typical bocce court. The bocce court is rectangular in shape, usually 60 to 80 feet long and 10 to 12 feet wide. A regulation court has a dimension of 91 feet by 13 feet. The court is surrounded by a wooden barrier, about 4½ inches high. The game is played by a player rolling a small ball, called the pallino, within the court which becomes the target ball. The players then roll bocce balls in turn, attempting to get as close to the pallino as possible.

[0003] One important feature of the game of bocce is that the balls can be played off the side boards and the backstops of the court. In this respect, the sport has similarities to table

shuffleboard and to billiards. Because of requirements for a level, hard play surface and for sturdy, rigid court boundaries to provide resilience, bocce courts are usually built as permanent structures and often available only at dedicated facilities. Building a bocce court can be very expensive and requires a dedicated area set aside for the court. The requirement of a dedicated facility limits the wide spread availability of bocce courts and makes it inconvenient for players who wish to play the game. Players without dedicated courts in their homes must reserve bocce courts at dedicated facilities.

[0004] Portable bocce courts are known. Some of the portable bocce courts include only a vinyl boundary defining the court without any court boards. Other portable bocce courts utilize vinyl mesh sideboards. These vinyl mesh sideboards are often not resilient enough to allow bocce balls to rebound off the sides. Portable bocce courts with no court boundaries or with only vinyl mesh sideboards are not desirable because these courts do not allow the player to exploit the full potential of the game. When such portable courts are used, the players cannot use the sideboards or the backstops to rebound the balls. The players are therefore limited in the strategies that can be used to score points. A court with resilient side boards and backstops permits strategic play by allowing the balls to bank or rebound off the walls, increasing the interest level of the game. More importantly, a court with resilient side boards and backstops permits a "true" bocce game, that is a game played according to recognized rules, to be played.

[0005] It is desirable to provide a bocce court that can be transported and readily installed at suitable locations so that bocce can be played at locations convenient for the players without requiring dedicated facilities. Furthermore, it is desirable to provide a transportable bocce court permitting a true bocce game to be played according to the recognized rules of the game.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] According to one embodiment of the present invention, a transportable sport court includes a playing surface that is substantially planar and a court perimeter formed on the top surface of the playing surface. The court perimeter includes a multiple number of board sections where adjacent board sections are secured together by a respective one of a multiple number of anchors. The board sections are made of a rigid material having a first height above the playing surface. The board sections provide a surface against which a game ball may rebound. In one embodiment, the sport court is a bocce court and the game ball includes a pallino or a bocce ball.

[0007] In another embodiment, the board sections include a first backstop and a second backstop defining respectively a first end and a second, opposite end of the court perimeter. Furthermore, the board sections include board sections forming a first sideboard and board sections forming a second sideboard. The first and second sideboards define respectively a first side and a second, opposite side of the court perimeter.

[0008] According to another aspect of the present invention, a transportable sport court includes a first backstop, a second

backstop, a first sideboard and a second sideboard. The first backstop defines a first end of the sport court while the second backstop defines a second end, opposite the first end, of the sport court. The first sideboard defines a first side of the sport court and includes a multiple number of board sections. The second sideboard defines a second side, opposite the first side, of the sport court and includes a multiple number of board sections. The sport court further includes a multiple number of corner anchors, each corner anchor engaging a selected one of the first and second backstops and a board section of the first and second sideboards that is perpendicular to the selected one of the first and second backstops. The sport court also includes a multiple number of side anchors, each side anchor engaging two adjacent board sections of the first and second sideboards. When assembled, the first and second backstops and the first and second sideboards, secured by the corner anchors and the side anchors, define a perimeter of the sport court.

[0009] The present invention is better understood upon consideration of the detailed description below and the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] Figure 1 is an illustrative figure of a typical bocce court.

[0011] Figure 2 is a top view of a transportable sport court according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0012] Figure 3 is a top view of the sport court of Figure 2 according to the alternate embodiment of the present invention.

[0013] Figure 4 is a perspective view of a corner anchor according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0014] Figure 5 is a top view of the corner anchor of Figure 4.

[0015] Figure 6 is a perspective view of a side anchor according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0016] Figure 7 is a cross-sectional view of the side anchor secured to a board section along the line A-A' of Figure 2.

[0017] Figure 8 is a top view of the side anchor of Figures 6 and 7.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0018] In accordance with the principles of the present invention, a transportable sport court includes a playing surface that is substantially planar and a court perimeter formed on the playing surface. The court perimeter is formed by multiple board sections where adjacent board sections are secured together by anchors. The board sections are made of a rigid material having a sufficient height to allow a game ball to rebound from the board sections. By using individual board sections to assemble the sport court, the sport court of the present invention can be readily disassembled and transported. Thus, the sport court of the present invention can be installed at a location desired by the players. In one embodiment, the sport court is used for playing the game of bocce and the rigid board sections allow the game balls including the bocce balls and the pallino to be played off the backstops and sideboards of the court.

[0019] According to another aspect of the present invention, a transportable sport court includes a first backstop and a second backstop defining opposite ends of the sport court. The sport court further includes a first sideboard and a second sideboard defining opposite sides of the sport court. The backstops and the sideboards are secured together by corner anchors and side anchors to form a perimeter of the sport court. The sport court can be assembled on any level surface. In one embodiment, the transportable sport court includes a playing surface underlying the backstops and the sideboards for providing a suitable surface for playing the game of bocce. The playing surface can be a carpet layer or an Astroturf layer.

[0020] While the transportable sport court of the present invention is particularly suited for the bocce game, one of ordinary skill in the art, upon being apprised of the present description, would appreciate that the sport court of the present invention can be adapted for use with other court games that requires a sturdy court boundary. In the present description, the term "game ball(s)" refers to a ball or balls that are used to play the court game of interest. For the game of bocce, the game balls include the bocce balls and the pallino.

[0021] Figure 2 is a top view of a transportable sport court according to one embodiment of the present invention. Referring to Figure 2, transportable sport court 10 is formed for playing the game of bocce and will be referred to hereinafter as bocce court 10. As described above, a bocce court is rectangular in shape and has a typical dimension of 12 feet by 80 feet and a regulation dimension of 13 feet by 90 feet. Because of the large size of the typical bocce court, the typical bocce courts are

formed as permanent structures and are not portable. In accordance with the present invention, bocce court 10 is formed using multiple board sections to enable bocce court 10 to be disassembled, transported and reassembled. Thus, bocce court 10 of the present invention can be transported and assembled for play at any suitable location desired by the players. For example, the bocce court of the present invention can be assembled on a parking lot, a tennis court or a basketball court. Furthermore, the bocce court can be assembled on thinly cut grass or on a plywood surface, such as on a large patio or on an indoor ballroom.

[0022] In the embodiment shown in Figure 2, bocce court 10 includes a bottom playing surface 12. Bottom playing surface 12 is optional and is included only when the foundation on which bocce court 10 is assembled is not suitable for playing bocce or the desired court game. For the game of bocce, a level and hard playing surface is generally desired. In one embodiment, bottom playing surface 12 is a layer of carpet. A carpet type designed for indoor and outdoor use is suitable. In other embodiments, bottom playing surface 12 can be made of Astro turf or other types of synthetic grass.

[0023] In some situations, if a suitable foundation is not available, a foundation for the bocce court can be constructed using 4 feet by 8 feet plywood of 1/2 to 3/4 inch thickness. The plywood is arranged to define a bottom surface that is at least as large as the desired playing area of the bocce court. In this manner, a solid foundation is provided to install the bottom playing surface, such as the carpet or the Astro turf.

[0024] Furthermore, in an alternate embodiment of the present invention, bottom playing surface 12 includes two layers of carpet, a first layer overlying the second layer. A bottom playing surface with two layers of carpet is desirable when the bocce court is being assembled on an underlying foundation that is very hard, such as concrete or asphalt. A second layer of carpet is added to provide extra padding. In the present embodiment, the second layer of carpet is an extra thin carpet suitable for indoor/outdoor use. The first or the top layer of carpet can be an indoor/outdoor carpet suitable for bocce or the desired court game to be played using the sport court. The top layer of carpet can be a carpet with a rubber backing to providing a sufficient degree of adhesion to the lower layer of carpet.

[0025] In an alternate embodiment of the present invention, sport court 10 includes a first spacer layer and a second spacer layer formed under the playing surface. The first and second spacer layers are positioned in alignment with the sideboards which are to be placed above the playing surface. The first and second spacer layers provide a slightly raised surface near the inner perimeter of the sideboards. Figure 3 is a top view of sport court 10 according to the alternate embodiment of the present invention. Figure 3 illustrates only part of sport court 10 to facilitate the illustration of the placement of the spacer layers. Referring to Figure 3, a first spacer layer 18a and a second spacer layer 18b are placed underneath playing surface 12 and aligned with the two side boards of sport court 10. In one embodiment, first spacer layer 18a and a second spacer layer 18b are made of a synthetic rubber material such as neoprene and have a thickness of about 1/8 inch.

[0026] As a result of introducing spacer layers 18a and 18b, a slightly raised surface is formed on the inner perimeter of sport court 10 along the two sideboards. The slightly raised inner perimeter has the effect of directing any game balls that hit the sideboards to careen and return back towards the center playing area of the sport court. This effect is sometimes useful and desirable as a game ball hitting the sideboards may roll along the sideboards and not return to the center playing area. By ensuring the game ball will always return to the center playing area, the game can be made more interesting to the players.

[0027] In Figure 3, spacer layers 18a and 18b are shown as extending beyond the length of the sideboards and extending outward into the outer perimeter of sport court 10. These extensions are optional and in other embodiments, the spacer layers may have a width and a length such that the spacer layers are flushed with the outside edge of the sideboards and do not extend beyond the length of the sideboards. However, providing an "oversized" spacer layer has the advantage of allowing easy alignment of the sideboard to the spacer layer where the sideboard is separated from the spacer layer by the bottom playing surface.

[0028] Returning to Figure 2, after bottom playing surface 12 is laid out, the court perimeter is then formed on top of the bottom playing surface. In the present embodiment, bocce court 10 includes a first backstop 14 formed as a one-piece board section and a second backstop 15 formed as a one-piece board section. In one embodiment, backstops 14 and 15 are 2 inch by 6 inch hard wood beams and are each 11 feet long. In other embodiment, first backstop 14 and second backstop 15 may be

formed as multiple board sections, the board sections being connected together using anchors as will be described in more detail below. Furthermore, the multiple board sections for forming the backstops can be of different lengths so that any desired width for the sport court can be realized.

[0029] In the present embodiment, bocce court 10 also includes a first sideboard 16 and a second side board 17 that are positioned perpendicular to backstops 14 and 15 to form the rectangular sport court. In the present embodiment, an end of a sideboard is stacked against the inner surface of a backstop. In accordance with the present invention, first sideboard 16 includes board sections 16A to 16G and second sideboard 17 includes board sections 17A to 17G. Because the sideboards are made of multiple segments, a very large playing field can be formed while still maintaining portability. In the present embodiment, board sections 16A to 16G and 17A to 17G are made of 2 inch by 6 inch hard wood beams and are each 10 feet long. Thus, sport court 10, including seven board sections for each sideboard, has a length of 70 feet.

[0030] In the present embodiment, sport court 10 is built using 2 inch by 6 inch wood beams. Therefore, sport court 10 is enclosed by a 6 inch perimeter, providing sufficient height to accommodate a bocce ball or other comparably size game balls. Backstops 14 and 15 can have a height of about 4 inches or more to accommodate most court games. Furthermore, in the present embodiment, the backstops and the sideboards are made of hard wood beams. In other embodiment, other material that can provide a hard surface capable of withstanding impact from the game balls

can be used. For example, the board sections can be formed using a hard plastic material of sufficient thickness.

[0031] Another advantage of using board sections to form the sideboards, instead of a one-piece construction, is that the length of the sport court of the present invention can be made adjustable. Thus, the sport court can be assembled in a variety of lengths depending on the desired playing conditions or the facilities on which the sport court is to be constructed. For instance, when a 10 feet board section is used for the sideboards, a sport court of 11 by 50 feet dimension or 11 by 70 feet dimension can be readily formed without requiring any change to the basic structure of the sport court.

[0032] In the present embodiment, the board sections for forming the sideboards are all of the same length, such as 10 feet. In other embodiments, the board sections can be of different lengths so that any desired length for the sport court can be realized. For example, each sideboard can be formed by five 10 feet board sections and one 5 feet board section to obtain a court length of 55 feet.

[0033] The board sections of sport court 10 are connected together by anchors to form the court perimeter. Specifically, in the present embodiment, sport court 10 includes corner anchors 20 and side anchors 22. As illustrated in Figure 2, corner anchor 20 is used to secure together a backstop and a board section of the sideboard perpendicular to the backstop while side anchor 22 is used to secure together two adjacent board sections of a sideboard. In one embodiment, the corner anchors and the side anchors are made of stainless steel, aluminum or steel. In other embodiments, other rigid material may be used as long as

the material can provide sufficient support for the board sections.

[0034] Figure 4 is a perspective view of a corner anchor according to one embodiment of the present invention. Figure 5 is a top view of the corner anchor of Figure 4. Referring to Figures 4 and 5, in the present embodiment, corner anchor 20 is formed as two 90° metal angles with a 45° miter joint and are butt welded together. The metal angles of the corner anchor ensure that the board sections secured thereto will stand perpendicular with respect to the bottom playing surface and will not topple over during use.

[0035] Corner anchor 20 is secured against the board sections using one or more fasteners. In the present embodiment, four carriage bolts are used to secure each board section to the corner anchor (Figure 4). The bolts are threaded into the board section in a countersunk manner so as not to interfere with the game balls that may hit against the inner surface of the board section. Referring to Figure 5, a bolt 26 is threaded in a countersunk manner in a board section forming backstop 14. The bolt head is flushed or recessed from the inner surface 14p of the board section. In the present embodiment, corner anchor 20 extends 18 inches along each board section and has a height of 5 inches. The bolts securing the corner anchor to the board sections are positioned so as to provide maximum support. The carriage bolts are 3/8 inch by 2 inches and are secured using a metal washer and a wing nut or a hex nut.

[0036] Figure 6 is a perspective view of a side anchor according to one embodiment of the present invention. Figure 7

is a cross-sectional view of the side anchor secured to board section 16A along the line A-A' of Figure 2. Figure 8 is a top view of the side anchor of Figures 6 and 7.

[0037] Referring to Figures 6 and 7, in the present embodiment, side anchor 22 is formed as a 90° metal angle. The metal angle of side anchor 22 is secured to two adjacent board sections through one or more fasteners. By using a 90° metal angle, the board sections are secured against the side anchor and will not topple over when assembled.

[0038] In the present embodiment, three carriage bolts are used to secure each board section to the side anchor (Figure 6). The bolts are threaded through the board section in a countersunk manner (Figure 7) so as not to interfere with the game balls that may hit against the inner surface of the board section. Referring to Figures 7 and 8, a bolt 28 is threaded through board section 16A in a countersunk manner so that the bolt head is flushed or recessed from the inner surface 16p of the board section. In the present embodiment, side anchor 22 is 11 inches in length and 5 inches in height. Side anchor 22 engages two adjacent board sections so that each board section reaches to the centerline of the metal angle (see Figures 6 and 8). Bolts 28, 29 and 30 for securing the side anchor to a board section are positioned in a triangular shape to provide maximum support. Each bolt is secured against the board section and the side anchor using a metal washer and a wing nut or a hex nut.

[0039] The above detailed descriptions are provided to illustrate specific embodiments of the present invention and are not intended to be limiting. Numerous modifications and

variations within the scope of the present invention are possible. For example, in an alternate embodiment of the present invention, the board sections further include Velcro strips to enable a more secure adhesion to the underlying playing surface. The present invention is defined by the appended claims.